

Allyson Mower and Lisa Chaufty

Do something no one has imagined

The 2008 SPARC Digital Repositories meeting

John Wilbanks (director of Science Commons) opened the SPARC Digital Repositories meeting¹ with a message that greatly resonated with those attending: do something no one has imagined, and don't wait. Indeed, many of the 330 repository managers, librarians, publishers, vendors, and technology specialists from around the world who convened in Baltimore to share success stories and failures regarding digital repositories, have already done so and plan to continue the trajectory.

According to Heather Joseph (executive director of SPARC), digital repositories have "moved out of infancy into a long and healthy life cycle," and the many panelists and speakers at the conference demonstrated this. The two main themes of the conference were that data needs to be inter-operable, connected, and shared; and that the success of repositories is connected to the services they can provide to faculty.

The initial panel focused on new horizons, but first provided a review of the current position of repositories. Norbert Lossau (director of Goettingen State and University Library) summarized that while many repositories exist (the count has now grown to approximately 1,200), the deposits to them remain low. Sayeed Choudhury (associate dean for library digital programs, Johns Hopkins University) indicated that despite this, institutional repositories (one kind of digital repository) act as a beginning and not an end to the process of ensuring open access to scholarly digital content. Shawn Martin (scholarly communication librarian at University of Pennsylvania) and Jennifer

Campbell-Meier (doctoral student, University of Hawaii) continued by noting that changing the mission statement of an institutional repository to come more in line with content creators and their needs can, perhaps, lead to higher deposit levels. For many faculty members, according to Martin, the issue of open access is not as important as raising their profile in the online environment.

This theme continued in the next session, where presenters discussed the importance of repositories providing value-added user services to members of the academic community rather than focusing on a message of open access versus closed access. Joan Giesecke (dean of libraries) and Paul Royster (coordinator of scholarly communications) both of University of Nebraska-Lincoln, shared their strategies for increasing the number of participating authors. Services include research reporting, promoting a work, obtaining copyright permissions, scanning, and typesetting.

Hideki Uchijima (librarian, Kanazawa University Library in Japan) offers an upload-just-in-time service and uses two key tools: the Repository Output Assessment Tool (ROAT) to standardize statistics and AIRway to resolve links in commercial databases.

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Lossau (mentioned above) leads the Digital Repository Infrastructure Vision for European Research (DRIVER) program, which provides trusted infrastructure to facilitate a network of repositories.

A new feature of this year's conference came in the form of the Innovation Fair. Twenty presenters had two minutes each to discuss their programs, projects, or ideas about repositories and their services. Highlights included Citeline (developed by MIT), KWICpics (Keyword in Context Pictures, developed by the California Digital Library), and RUcore's Faculty Portal (a custom interface for faculty at Rutgers University). These three were particularly exciting because they offered personalized services for authors as well as custom viewing options for users. Repository managers could potentially use them to augment their existing services and increase author participation.

Day two of the conference commenced with a public policy discussion, giving conference attendees a view of world trends and perspectives from Europe, Japan, and the United States. David Prosser (director of SPARC Europe) asserted that the open access policy argument has been won by the open access movement through the impetus of initiatives like the European Union's (EU) Lisbon Agenda, which strives to make the EU the

"most competitive and dynamic knowledge-driven economy by 2010." Prosser expects that we are fast approaching a time when "it will be unusual for any leading institution or funder not to have an [open access] mandate." The mandates currently in place will result in a significant number of papers being made openly accessible over the next few years. Syun Tutiya (professor of cognitive and information sciences, Chiba University) talked about the Japanese policy environment and compared the current environment to that of 2004, when SPARC last held its repository conference.

While no policies are in place, the number of repositories in Japan has risen since 2004 from four to the current 80. Bonnie Klein (copyright specialist, Defense Technology Information Center) gave an overview of some U.S. federal government repositories and pointed out the value each agency places in collaborating for the purpose of providing public access to government documents. Such repositories include science.gov, which contains content from 13 federal science agencies, and WorldWideScience.org.

Presentations shifted from public policy to campus publishing strategies. Rea Devakos (coordinator, scholarly communication initiatives, University of Toronto) reviewed the Canadian publishing project Synergies, which

Free ACRL scholarly communication resources

Looking to spread the word about scholarly communication issues? The recently updated ACRL Scholarly Communication Toolkit provides context and background by summarizing key issues to offer quick, basic information on scholarly communication topics. It also links to examples of specific tools, including handouts, presentations, and videos for libraries to adapt and use on their own campuses. The updated toolkit serves as a resource for scholarly communication discussions inside the library, outreach programs to faculty and administrators, and library school students seeking to incorporate these issues into their course

work. Libraries can also contribute to the toolkit by linking to tools and case studies on their local scholarly communication campaigns. The ACRL Scholarly Communication Toolkit is available at www.acrl.org/scholcomm/.

The new Association of Research Libraries/ACRL Institute on Scholarly Communication guide "Developing a Scholarly Communication Program in Your Library" provides additional background information and outlines steps for libraries interested in developing scholarly communication programs. The guide is available online at www.arl.org/sc/institute/fair/scprog.

is a research and dissemination tool that will use the Public Knowledge Project to make social science and humanities research digital. Devakos also highlighted Ontario's Scholars Portal, which is licensed to 20 Ontario universities and is a regional node of the Synergies project. Devakos relayed that such projects help information to be, in Caroline Haythornethwaite's words, "attached, found, alive and [able to] evolve."

Catherine Mitchell (director, eScholarship Publishing Group, California Digital Library) suggested provocatively that conversations about "the repository" in and of itself should stop and be reframed to focus on publishing services. She argued that institutional repositories stand as by-products of services rendered rather than ends in themselves.

An example of operating a repository on a small, liberal arts college campus came from Macalester College. Janet Sietmann (manager, DigitalCommons Project) and Teresa Fishel (library director) showcased the student research and publications available in their institutional repository. Both advised against "death by planning," urging strongly that all library staff should promote the repository, and suggested starting with a specific project that meets the needs of a specific audience.

Final sessions centered on marketing strategies. Bob Witeck (CEO, Witeck-Combs Communications) offered four questions or strategies repository managers should consider in order to successfully market their repositories: Who cares? Why does it matter? Who will fund/support and build trust?

These discussions continued with the conference's first-ever marketing practicum led by Nicole Colovos (vice president, Bremmer & Goris Communications). Colovos emphasized the importance of developing a consistent message by means of a position statement. Creating such a statement identifies an audience, their needs, and how the repository can help them. She advised that the statement be crafted and tailored for faculty in individual disciplines.

David Shulenberg (vice president for academic affairs, National Association of State Universities and Land-Grant Colleges) closed the session by recommending a practical approach to building and maintaining digital repositories. Shulenberg relayed a short synopsis of the history of publication and distribution and focused on "the gift" of scholarly knowledge. The role of digital repositories, in his view, is to assure that intellectual products paid for by donors and benefactors remain available for the public. Further, institutional repositories should showcase to citizens the research and scholarship happening on academic campuses and thereby enhances the value of the university in the eyes of the public. Shulenberg offered seven steps for library and information professionals to consider: have an institutional repository; work with administrators to build understanding; initiate discussions about intellectual property policies; support efforts to spread public access policies, like the one put forward by the National Institutes of Health; educate campus units to support the best interests of their members; work with departments to produce deposit habits; and brand your institutional repository products as university material.

As attendees, we came away from this conference with more ideas for enhancing our repository content and workflow. Moreover, we developed a new action plan for communicating our message: tailor our messages for all of the constituencies we work with (administration, faculty based on academic discipline, our IT department, and subject librarians); focus less on the open access argument and more on how our library's scholarly communication program can best serve faculty needs; and, finally, market scholarly communication services more widely and aggressively.

Note

1. The SPARC Digital Repositories meeting was held November 17–19, 2008, in Baltimore. 